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DIFFICULT LIVING CONDITIONS IN RUMANIA

Le Populaire de Paris  
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Official statistics show that the number of wage earners in Rumania increased from 1,200,000 in 1948 to 2,500,000 in 1953. Twenty-four percent of the wage earners are women. Many peasants, especially the young, and the former middle classes, stripped of their land and refusing to accept the serf-like life in the collectives, are becoming laborers in factories. Because of the high cost of living, women are forced to help support their families by taking jobs which were forbidden to them by protective labor laws before the advent of the People's Democracy. They work in factories, in mines (including underground operations), in the petroleum industry, and as locomotive mechanics, earthwork laborers, and deep-sea fishermen.

Rumania did not ration food during World War II, but has had to do so since the Communists came to power. The food situation has become so desperate that, under the rationing program, each wage earner draws only from 350 to 550 grams (according to his work) of black bread per day and 350 grams of meat per week. However, weeks, sometimes months, pass between issues of meat rations. Sugar, at 65 lei (2,400 French francs) per kilogram, has become the main item on the black market. The theoretical monthly allotment of sugar is one pound per person, but ration cards are never honored. Vegetable oil and cooking fat are equally scarce, and a poor quality sunflower oil sells at an exorbitant price. One lemon costs 3.5 lei; one orange, 4 lei; and a liter of milk, 4 lei. The price per kilogram of tomatoes is 25 lei; of wheat flour, 6 lei; of potatoes, 5 lei; of corn meal, 6 lei; and of lard, from 35 to 40 lei. The official price of pork is 3.6 lei per kilogram, but it sells for 20 lei.

At least 15 percent of the skilled workers's average wage of 400 lei [per month] and of the day laborer's average wage of 200 lei goes for taxes, dues, contributions, and party and labor union newspapers.

In their undernourished condition, the workers are subject to sickness, and epidemics of influenza rage, especially in the Pitesti, Arad, and Timisoara regions. Modern medicines are scarce; many physicians have been purged, and many of those now practicing are poorly qualified recent medical school graduates with less skill than professional nurses used to have.

About 145 foreigners who attended the Youth Festival in Bucharest were won over by the artificially created atmosphere there and asked permission to live and work in Rumania. Soon after the end of the festival, however, the difference between wages and purchasing power reappeared, and the visitors, unable to live on their wages and appalled by the food in the factory canteens, asked to be sent home.

Foreigners in Rumania must have ration cards, which are allotted in the following way: heads of diplomatic missions, 6 cards; officials of embassies and legations, 3 cards; embassy domestic staffs, 2 cards. Unprivileged foreigners are subject to the same regulations as apply to the Rumanian people. -- Bucharest correspondent of the ACI [probably Agence Cooperative d'Information, Cooperative Information Agency]

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